



Sustainability Report SC Local Food Systems Workshop

South Carolina Food Policy Council



State of South Carolina
Department of Agriculture

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Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

Dear Reader,

Recently, I set forth an aggressive agenda for South Carolina agriculture and agribusiness with a strategic theme and concept that agribusiness in South Carolina can be increased to \$50 billion by the year 2020. I call it the "50 by 20" vision. In order to achieve this goal and to maintain it, I recognize the importance of increasing and sustaining our local food systems throughout the state, whether it be through a Farm to School Program, increasing accessibility to local farmers markets, increasing participation in CSAs and agritourism, or creating entrepreneur opportunities through a Community Kitchen or an Incubator Farm program.

This report is generated from the words and discussion from participants in the 2010 Sustainable SC Local Food Systems Workshop. While I serve as your Commissioner of Agriculture, my staff and I will strive to provide leadership in marketing and promotion of South Carolina agriculture, as well as information and resources to farmers and consumers. I am proud and encouraged by the number and diversity of people and organizations who attended the workshop, because it is imperative for a wide sector of the population to recognize and work together to ensure a sustainable, profitable, accessible and safe food supply for all citizens of South Carolina.

By working together with the S.C. Food Policy Council and others, I believe that we can reach the 50 by 20 goal and allow South Carolina to be a model leader in sustainable and profit agriculture production throughout the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh E. Weathers" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hugh E. Weathers

Foreword

In 2006, a multi-stakeholder group recognized the impact of health, environmental, educational, and economic factors on the state's food systems and formed the South Carolina Food Policy Council, which is housed under the State Department of Agriculture.

The Council is one of many Food Policy Councils across the Nation and provides a forum for these SC stakeholders in food, health, and agricultural sectors to collaborate on the sustainability of agriculture and food systems in the state and to propose solutions and initiatives to key decision makers. As a result of these discussions and meetings with various stakeholders in the SC Food System, an annual report is developed and provided to the State Commissioner of Agriculture. In the 2008 report, strategies for improving accessibility and availability of fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods as a part of a Farm to Institution initiative were specifically recommended.

In late 2009, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and the S.C. Department of Agriculture initiated a contract for more interagency collaboration on issues and initiative common to both agencies. This collaborative effort helped the Food Policy Council fund and host the state's first Sustainable Local Food Systems Workshop. The results of which are recorded in this Report.

Overall, the S.C. Food Policy Council has proven to be a viable, functioning group that continues to work towards the goals of growth, promotion, and protection of a healthy agricultural industry and a safe, plentiful and healthy food supply for residents of the State. Thank you to everyone who has participated in this process.

Acknowledgments

The success of this workshop, and the information generated to create the report, would not have happened without the support and involvement of the S.C. Food Policy Council planning committee, whose members include: Todd Bedenbaugh, Beth Crocker, Kevin Elliott, Darcy Freedman, Brandon Grace, Holly Haring, Teresa Hill, Dave Lamie, Larry McKenzie, Allison Schuam, Diana Vossbrink, Keith Willoughby, Charles Wingard and Geoff Zender.

Special thanks to the Columbia Hilton staff and Paul Cernansky with Ruth's Chris Steak House for their assistance and planning to provide the group with wonderful meals prepared with local foods.

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Program Overview

On January 29, 2010, the Food Policy Council of South Carolina held the first Sustainable South Carolina Local Food Systems Workshop at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Columbia. The morning session featured presentations about why a sustainable local food system would be advantageous to South Carolina. These presentations highlighted economic, environmental, health, food safety, and food access issues.

Following this there was a panel discussion about the current successes and examples of sustainable local food systems in South Carolina. Panel members represented the Anderson County farm to school program, the Healthy Carolina dining program at the University of South Carolina, the SC Department of Education's Fresh Fruit & Vegetable program, sustainable practices on Rawls Farm, the Plant a Row project and the Hub City Farmer's Market.

The afternoon session was devoted to facilitated focus groups of workshop participants discussing how South Carolina's food system could be made more sustainable. There were four focus groups and each was devoted to a specific aspect of a sustainable food system: economic and farm sustainability, food access and equality, the environment and food safety. The facilitated focus groups were asked to identify issues and to go through discussion on each of the issues using the following steps:

1. Identify Issues/Questions
2. Identify Barriers
3. Examples of Successful Sustainable, Local Food system practices (In-state or out of state).
4. Needs - what resources are needed to address these issues/questions?
5. Solutions - how can we go about solving these issues/questions?

This report is a summary of those discussions and the principles that were articulated that day. Participants in this workshop include planners, academics, regulators, non-profits, government, farmers and consumers.

**This report is a collaborative effort between the SC Department of Agriculture and the SC Department of Health & Environmental Control, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO). Over 70 participants attended the Workshop and came together to generate the discussion that serves as the basis of this report. This report was designed to serve as a guide to help SC leaders and citizens identify and work towards the common goal of creating sustainable, local food systems in South Carolina. Participants will receive copies of the report and/or access to download the report as of June 2010. Additional copies of the toolkit will be available upon request. A PDF of the toolkit will be available for download through the Department of Agriculture's website and the DNPAO website.



GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The participants identified a crucial factor to facilitating discussion in their groups which was to establish the term "sustainability" and what it means to them. There was a great deal of discussion about the effect of how sustainability is defined and the role that this definition plays in shaping the perception of the current population's role in land preservation, farming, and food processing.

The groups quickly identified many key points related to the overall sustainability of farming and agriculture in South Carolina. Most significantly, that the term sustainable agriculture could very well mean "surviving" in today's economic climate.

The groups looked at the meaning of the term "sustainable farm" and discussed what that meant to them, which includes "making foods available to consumers," "protecting the physical land," and "preserving farms and farm life." The group also pointed out however, that being "sustainable" did not always mean that the farm was going to be more efficient.

They also understood the term "sustainable" to encompass economic considerations. The group saw the term "sustainable farming" to mean "maintaining a farming industry in SC" and/or "being able to continue farming families and farms for generations to come."

And finally, when discussing the meaning of "sustainable agriculture" or "sustainable farming" from a social perspective, the group understood the term to mean "setting a standard of quality of life for people," "setting a quality of life for animals" and the understanding that preservation of our current SC resources will lead to future opportunities for growth, profitability and success in farming.

The definition of sustainability is the idea of using resources, including land, water, food and energy in a way that is beneficial to current uses but does not compromise the availability of these resources for future generations. Also, the agreed upon definition should take into account sustainability in all forms, not just the preservation of environmental quality, but the preservation of human and animal life.



I. ECONOMIC & FARM SUSTAINABILITY

This group discussed a wide variety of topics that they believed are important to the overall sustainability of profitable and successful farming operations and rural communities throughout south Carolina.

A. Need for Expansion and Diversity in Marketing - Agriculture is a diverse industry. Both growers and consumers are diverse, which can make widespread coordination and communication with and between producers and consumers challenging. No matter what, it is imperative that high quality products are offered, but there are also a lot of opportunities available for niche products. The group felt that there are still many untapped opportunities to support the Department of Agriculture's Certified SC Grown branding program at the local level and the group felt that there could be better efforts to tap into the awareness and education of students and young people.

B. Need for an Increase in Processing Facilities in SC - Maintaining a sustainable agricultural community includes the need for continued growth, diversity of products, and continual marketing. There are many challenges, however, when trying to address these goals. The first challenge includes the need for more processing for farmers who could sell their crops directly to a processing facility and saving on transportation costs, or using the processing facility to create the farmers' own value added products.

C. Distribution Challenges - Distribution challenges can consist of central locations and proximity to rural farms. Challenges also pop up in helping distribution facilities maintain the identity and sales of "local" food products to their customers. For example, if distributors purchase from many sources and they don't have a way of segregating products, how can they accurately offer a local product to the customer?

D. Economic Impact of Buying/Using Local Ag Products - Challenges of retaining local agriculture products and establishing the economic impact of "buying local" includes questions such as "does the public know about the economic impact of buying local?" A good example is the Anderson County food report. It is important to communicate the value of the agriculture industry as a contributor to the tax base, as well as educate people so they can use this information to create economic opportunities.

E. Keeping the Farm and the Farmer in Business - Being able to operate and have a profitable farming operation cannot be overlooked when discussing these issues of sustainability. A few important operational issues that present big challenges to small, independent farmers include obtaining adequate health insurance and liability insurance. The group shared some ideas related to health insurance cooperatives and members cooperatives in general to cut down on costs, and also in some cases, to provide an entity large enough to entice providers into offering coverage. (For example, vegetable growers participating in a cooperative so as to obtain product liability insurance for their products. This can also come into play for farms offering agritourism and looking for additional insurance coverage). The group also discussed the importance of considering the future availability, cost, and sustainability of energy and water issues.

Issues & Strategies/needs

1. Promotional Activities. The first need is the need for promotional activities such as websites, online video clips, and music. It is most important to make these promotional tools appealing to a large audience. The issue that needs to be addressed here is the location of farmers markets so that they will receive as much visibility as possible. The solution is to work with local policy makers when they are locating these facilities.

2. Marketing/Linkages. The second need is the need to have links between farmers and outlets. The issues with this include the marketing and linkages which are very complex and have many different points. For example, farmers do not have time to market their crops and the locations for purchase may be unknown. The most successful farmers are those that combine their agricultural skills with business skills. In addition, it is necessary to make distribution of products in retail outlets easier. Also, once the products are available in these locations the products must remain consistent. Finally, an assessment must be made to ensure distribution in large retail centers remains profitable for farmers and that the costs associated with this distribution do not create a market barrier.

3. Niche. The third issue has to do with having too much of the same product. There needs to be variety, diversity and demand. The solution would be to market niche/quality products, whether it be heirloom vegetables, organic product, free-range eggs and chicken, grass-fed beef, or any other type of production type niche product that allows you to market your product in a unique way. Identifying markets that will promote and enhance your niche product(s) is important too.

4. Growth of farms. The next need is the growth of farms. Locally, the problem is that as a whole South Carolina is a producer state that lacks adequate processing facilities. Two ideas are that the Clemson meat processing plant could be modified to support local and small farms or another option would be to rent or use school equipment on the weekends. South Carolina certified trucks could go to the farm, pick up, process, and then take the value added goods to retail locations. Other issues include the availability of Hoop Houses, processing facility needs, NC mobile processing unit, GA commercial canning products at schools, and extend the season via high tunnel.

5. Farm to institution. The next need is to help farms grow into institutions. There is the need to wholesale local auction market-schools, hospitals, and military bases by tagging items, farmer's leave, and bulk. In addition, know and identify the profit per acre. The problem is how to get linked into large distributors, the infrastructure and capacity. It is important to recognize that buyers want items that are prepared. Value added facilities are needed. Specifically, there needs to be community processing co-ops. Yet, what is the cost? Obtaining appropriate insurance to be considered an "approved source" for supplying schools may be an issue. The group also inquired about exploring the formation of a regional food processing coop.

6. Community Design. The need is to maintain farmers, markets and not let land be overly developed. The problems are zoning and land use as well as the balance of characteristics of farm's smell with complaints.

7. Operational. We need a water supply although the supply is limited; there is a current bill at the statehouse supporting surface water use for agricultural uses. The bill would look at prioritizing agriculture as a priority use in times of drought conditions or conditions where water availability is limited. This type of legislation adds to the sustainability of farming operations, even during times of environmental challenges such as drought.

8. Economic Value. This strategy includes educating legislators on the economic impact and benefit of local farms. Problems include that policy makers may not understand economic value and impact. People need to create a demand and elect officials who support farm to institution concepts. Also, the agriculture industry needs to promote value and communicate the impact to the public.

9. Partnerships. There is a need to increase partnerships, especially unique and novel partnerships. An example could be traditional agricultural commodity groups partnering with the slow foods movement and encouraging people to eat more meals at home, using fresh, local produce. Other types of partnerships might be increasing local community coalitions focused on a common goal of healthy eating and lifestyles, which would include more fresh produce. Eat Smart, Move More SC has been a great leader in encouraging these types of local partnerships that focus on resources and leadership in local communities working towards a common goal.

10. Operational II. More operational issues include farm's use of energy, farmer's co-op for Health Insurance, and tax breaks for farmers. One thing to look at here is whether the agriculture industry should begin to use alternative energy. A good idea would be to train people on farm energy and how to efficiently use energy, using the movie Farming for the Future. The problems with tax breaks are that there are sales tax issues and implications. The Tax Realignment



Commission (TRAC) was mentioned and its work on future recommendations for tax incentives in South Carolina that could accomplish more than just bringing in more income for the State, but also changing people's behavior. For example, increasing the cigarette tax and reducing the use of cigarettes, or taxing soda, and addressing nutrition and dental concerns related to over consumption of soft drinks.

11. Wrap-around Support for Sustainability. One strategy includes connecting brokers to link fertilizer to farmers- i.e., chicken farmers to feed farmers. A good idea would be to have the "Craig's List for Farmers." The current problem is that it costs to subscribe to most advertising forums. There was also an issue raised about commissions that are generated.

II. HEALTH, FOOD ACCESS & EQUALITY ISSUES/SOLUTIONS

This group discussed many programs that they believed would lead to greater healthy food access and would address concerns related to food equality for all citizens in South Carolina.

A. Increase Community Farmers Markets - This group identified increasing community farmers markets to be the primary solution for increasing access to healthy, local foods. Barriers to meeting this goal include cost of transportation to sell/buy at the farmers market, the cost of healthy foods, the limited number of farmers/vendors, and the overall rural nature of communities throughout South Carolina, i.e., very spread out. Finally, the difficulty in accepting EBT, WIC and senior vouchers at the market was identified.

In order to address some of these barriers, the group discussed the need for greater resources and support such as making sure that each community market is organized around the specific it serves. With regard to community market models and plans, one size does not fit all. In addition, successful community markets have shown that community leader support and buy-in is imperative for thriving and sustainable community markets. Market hours of operation and location need to be based upon the specific needs of each community. For example, Saturday is not always the best day for a community market. Many communities have found that Tuesday or Thursday markets are much more successful in meeting the needs of the community and vendor availability.

Another suggestion from the group for addressing some of the barriers facing the increase/sustainability of community farmers markets is creating incentives to make it easier for markets/vendors to offer Wireless EBT, WIC and senior vouchers acceptance. There is concern that many of these programs are not being fully utilized in SC, which is a cause of concern because that seems to indicate that the users are not able to fully access their financial assistance and it also means that farmers are not fully realizing the purchasing power available from folks receiving this types of assistance. The group came up with two ideas to increasing accessibility and cashing out these vouchers, including taking farmers markets to community-worksites, schools, churches, etc. Also a mobile market could be used. This could be something as simple as converting a bookmobile or ice cream truck into a produce delivery market. Basically the group was suggesting the use of some existing mobile resource that can make deliveries or actually going out into communities that have the greatest transportation challenges and also the greatest availability of EBT, WIC and senior voucher funds to spend on fresh SC produce.

The group also realized that there is a need to increase awareness among those people who receive financial assistance about the options to use EBT, WIC and senior vouchers at their local community markets.

B. Increase Community Gardens - The second solution discussed by the group to increase access to healthy foods involves creating community gardens, which also builds relationships in neighborhoods and communities, in addition to empowering people. The group identified barriers such as the difficulty of acquiring land, the lack of adult participation and community involvement. It is a slow process and it is difficult to maintain as well. It is important to remember that people may not want to grow their own food. The resources needed to make this happen are more stakeholders in the community that are interested. The group proposes that communities need to be involved in the planning process for both community gardens and encouraging neighborhood backyard gardens. One example of success is the Harvest Hope garden project showcasing a successful community garden in South Carolina. http://realestate.dbusinessnews.com/shownews.php?newsid=180365&type_news=past

C. Implement the Use of Vegetable Wagons or Mobile Markets - The third solution discussed by the group to increase accessibility to fresh fruits and vegetables is to have vegetable wagons circulating through neighborhoods, much like ice cream vendor trucks. In order to facilitate these types of mobile markets, wireless EBT card readers systems are needed. On a related note, the group discussed the successful Meals on Wheels program in the Columbia area that delivers meals to elderly/retired populations. Meals are prepared and delivered through a volunteer system. The group suggested working with the already established Meals on Wheels program to explore opportunities to increase elderly populations access to healthy SC fruit and vegetable products in addition to the ready to eat meals currently being provided through Meals on Wheels. See: <http://www.seniorresourcesinc.org/Meals%20on%20Wheels.htm> Green Pea Mobile Market example: <http://www.green-peamobilemarket.org/about.html>

D. Increase the Use of Co-ops - Another proposed solution includes having more Co-Ops. The use of Co-Ops can provide a number of benefits to the members. You can have Farmers Cooperatives where members share and benefit from reduced costs in purchasing supplies and sometimes equipment, because the Cooperative is buying in bulk and the overall cost is divided evenly among the members. Cooperatives can also be useful marketing tools for farmers because once again, you are selling in bulk and are better able to meet some buyer demands for larger quantities that one small farmer might not otherwise be able to meet. Profits and losses are shared evenly among cooperative members.

There are also consumer cooperatives, where the consumers benefit from purchasing in bulk and then dividing the produce evenly among all members. Many times the members take turns shopping. For example, if you have 12 consumer members, each consumer is responsible for buying for the group one month out of the year. They all pay in the same amount and get more produce for their dollar than if they purchased individually. A consumer cooperative concept could also be useful for a group of local chefs who are interested in buying in bulk on items/produce that they are all using. A good example could be onions, tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, etc.

Here in South Carolina, however, it appears that we face a cultural barrier towards the use and participation in Co-ops because they seem to have a "hippy reputation." There appears to be little prior experience in South Carolina and the location as well. With education and promotion, however, in these tough economic times, the concept of participating and using Co-operatives as a tool for saving money could be greatly welcomed by both farmers and consumers.

E. Increase Farming Opportunities - The resources that we need are the need for community leadership, and they are not easy to set up. One example of this is the Growing Farmers incubator program in Charleston. See: http://www.lowcountrylocalfirst.org/farm_fresh_food. The solutions include sliding scale fees, having incentives to use vacant storefronts, and sell products that are demanded in the area.

Other ways to increase farming opportunities include working with current farmers through estate planning and increasing awareness and visibility of farm transition opportunities to non-family members interested in taking over the farming operation. Currently in NC there is a non-profit, North Carolina Farm Transition Network (NCFTN), which works with farmer on estate planning and farm transition issues. NCFTN has an interest in expanding into the South Carolina area. NCFTN has also created a valuable resource in its "Planning for the Future of Your Farm" workbook that could probably be easily adapted to address South Carolina specific issues. The workbook helps farmers and landowners to pull together valuable information that will help them when meeting with lawyers and estate planners. This information is imperative to those professionals helping farmers and landowners who want to preserve their farms as active, sustainable entities beyond their lifetime. <http://www.ncftn.org/>

F. Increase Participation and Availability of CSAs - The fifth solution includes having CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture). The barriers are that demand is greater than supply, the cost, the trust issues, and the access and publicity. What we need is a coordinating organization. An example of success includes the Farmer incubator program in Charleston. See: http://lowcountrylocalfirst.org/Community_Supported_Agriculture

Another opportunity resulting from the increase of CSA participation could also be perks in healthcare plans offered by insurance companies and employers. Basically, if participants are showing the insurer/employer that they are taking steps to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle, such as participating in a CSA program, they would receive a better rate for their healthcare coverage. Insurers could be very interested in this because having healthier clients or those taking preventative steps, could reduce the costs and overall numbers of healthcare treatments related to obesity and poor nutrition.

G. Creation of Hybrid Markets - The final solution is a hybrid market. An example of success is an organic farm in Aiken, where they have a veggie share program where you buy it from a supplier in bulk and pass savings to purchasers.

H. Miscellaneous Concerns/Issues/Discussion - In conclusion, the group decided that markets are part of the whole local food system and efforts are needed to address all parts of the system: growing, distribution, cooking etc. Distribution costs are an issue and the rural transportation authority. The State needs a central agency to serve as a resource to farmers, to apply for grants, and it needs to be a coordinated effort. Possible suggestions include the Clemson Extension, the Department of Agriculture or the United Way. Also it is important to understand that healthy food is more than just fruits and vegetables - there is also a demand for fresh, local meat. Another issue is the loss of grocery stores in the inner city. There is a need to capitalize on SC food culture, culinary education, and job training.

III. ENVIRONMENT

This group discussed sustainability of local food systems from an environmental perspective including what environmental benefits are likely to occur by supporting local food systems? And what policies need to be developed to support and advocate for these benefits?

A. Developing "Stewards of the Land." - The group also addressed the need to motivate younger generations to protect the land as well as encouraging older individuals who are already working on the land, envisioning themselves as stewards of the land. When using the phrase "steward of the land" the group meant someone that is utilizing the land for the benefits it is intended to provide, but also protecting the inherent value in the land but not using the land wastefully. Concepts that are associated with this idea of land stewardship are integrated pest management, low till practices and crop rotation. As far as apprenticeship and incubator programs it was pointed out that farming is a craft that is best learned on the land. The classroom can teach a young farmer many beneficial concepts, such as the correct amount of fertilizer or the crops appropriate for a certain soil quality and type, but many of the most important aspects of the profession come from first hand experience. Therefore, agriculture schools and community centers need to make available to young adults and adolescents opportunities to work on farms. Finally, incubator programs are already being utilized in some areas of the state and these programs allow young farmers to receive a small acreage of land to go ahead and begin farming on. This is another way to develop a sense of responsibility for one's food and impact on the earth.

B. Environmentally Friendly Practices are often Pocket-Book Friendly - Another main point involves the convergence among interests such as environmental, social and economic concerns that all serve as drivers towards change. This means that environmental issues cannot be viewed in a vacuum. In order to protect the planet but also remain dynamic and growing population, the group concluded that individuals must still be able to participate in the social and economic activities as they have before. The group concluded that it is crucial, however, that they do so in a way that is mindful of their environmental impact and tries to mitigate this impact as much as possible. This includes farmers, food processors, food distributors, restaurants and consumers. The discussion centered on the need for teaching individuals involved in the food system how environmentally friendly practices can often be economically beneficial.

The group referred back to many of the comments shared by Charles Wingard with W.P. Rawl farms and his examples of how their changes to be more energy efficient on the farm and in food packaging of fresh vegetables, really made a difference economically on the bottom line as well. The group pointed out that it is important to remember the goal often times needs to be explained in terms that will be viewed as most important to the individual listening. For example, the group felt that comments about sustainability practices and costs savings, would be very important when addressing a group of farmers and asking them to implement sustainability practices on their farms. Comments geared towards consumer audiences, however, would likely be more focused on sustainable shopping and buying habits that support sustainable farming practices.

C. Natural Resource Conservation - The group's final discussion centered around conservation and protection of natural resources, especially water quality, water availability, cover crops, buffers, energy efficiency, diverse landscape uses, and soil quality. The group recognized that there are many other specific concerns related to natural resource conservation, but focused discussion on these specific issues because they believed that they were all directly related to farming and would be of specific interest to farmers.

IV. FOOD SAFETY

The issues presented by food safety concerns are numerous and extend from the national level to the local level. The individuals involved in the food safety discussion highlighted the areas of food safety they felt were of the highest importance to be addressed so that South Carolina can move forward with a sustainable local food system.

A. Policy Issues

1. **National** - The issues of national policy that need to be addressed are setting standards by the United States Department of Agriculture for food safety and the future of food safety in the country.

2. **State** - At the state level questions to consider are the citing of central distribution facilities, regulations for roadside stands and farmers markets from DHEC, and how much of the concern of bio-security should be allowed to filter into food safety regulations in order to keep them realistic.

3. **Local** - At the local level small scale farmers need access to processing facilities, farmers need access to answers for their food safety and processing questions and concerns, and in order to distribute local food into schools administrators need their questions answered and the farmers need the ability to provide feedback about the distribution process.

B. Farmers Need Access to a Central, Consistent Source of Information to Answer their Food Safety and Food Processing Questions. Food safety concerns often create a market barrier for farmers because standards can be misunderstood by consumers or there can be a perception by the public that the standards are not being followed or are not stringent enough. There is an on-going difficulty in the ability for real concerns to be identified and overcoming misconceptions of "unsafe" practices. Farmers need access to answers for their food safety and processing questions and concerns.

Providing a single source or clearinghouse of information about food safety in South Carolina could better serve our farmers in their quest for food safety compliance. This information source can also provide information for consumers about food safety and help to maintain the same consumer confidence in purchasing from roadside stands and community farmers markets as when purchasing from a grocery store.

C. Cost of Food Safety Compliance Can Be a Market Barrier & Competitive Disadvantage for Smaller Farmers. Another way that food safety presents market barriers are by the one size fits all approach because many regulations do not take into account the size of the farm. Food safety regulations need to spread costs across the industry in order for all participants to have equal access to the market.

D. Food Safety Record Keeping Requirements. The final barrier that must be addressed is the record keeping involved to ensure accountability because it is time consuming for growers and operators.

E. Increase in Consumer Education Efforts Related to Food Safety and Safe Food Handling Practices. Participants in this discussion addressed solutions to these issues that can be implemented easily. The first idea is that farmers and consumers can take the time to educate themselves on safe food practices and the real health threats associated with food production and distribution. Farmers can also educate themselves about good agriculture practices (GAP), which are recommendations and knowledge for addressing environmental, economic and social factors of on-farm production and post production that result in safe and healthy foods. Value added centers that are community run are also a good idea because they offer a convenient place to make the product ready to use and safe. Finally, another suggestion is to make certification for small farmers cheaper and less time intensive so that consumers from farmer's markets or roadside stands can feel the same confidence in food safety as they do from larger grocery stores.

F. Food Safety at Farmers Markets. Food safety at farmer's markets produces a unique set of concerns. Issues that are important here include traceability, processing, and handling. Many of these issues are addressed by DHEC inspections and enforcement as well as DHEC certification by vendors. Suggestions for improving farmers markets include a state wide safety campaign on site, the development of a DHEC certified kitchen for canning and processing foods, commodity specific regulations, required inspections and training for farmer market vendors and an extending growing season.

Recommendations for Supporting Sustainable Local Food Systems in SC:

Based upon the discussion in the above report, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Expand and Diversify Marketing -
 - i. Identify new target populations for buying and having a preference for South Carolina products.
 - ii. Position EBT card readers in community farmers markets - helping market managers to recognize the economic advantage of accepting EBT cards and vouchers.
 - iii. Increase demand for Certified SC Grown produce, as well as expanding beyond SC fresh produce, such as meat, seafood, dairy, etc
 - iv. Increase demand and production of Certified SC Products.
- b. Increase Processing Facilities -
 - i. Advocate for targeted agribusiness development authority in SC such as the one proposed in H. 4739.
 - ii. Implement Community Kitchen/Small Processing Facility - allowing small farmers the opportunity to create value added products on an as needed basis. This can expand the supply and increase the use of SC ready to use products in institutions such as schools, hospitals, restaurants, etc.
 - iii. Expand existing processing facilities and/or allow the facilities to be rented for use of processing to increase the availability of value added products.
- c. Respond to Distribution Channel Challenges-
 - i. Explore the use of rural cooperatives to increase product distribution and to meet market demand.
- d. Educate Leaders and Consumers about the Impact of Buying/Using Local Ag Products
 - i. Capture and share economic data related local food systems.
 - ii. Increase and promote the environmental benefits of local agriculture.
- e. Keep the Farm and the Farmer in Business -
 - i. Encourage farm estate plans and/or transition plans from generation to generation using tools such as the "Planning Your Farm Workbook."
 - ii. Advocate for initiatives that support affordable health insurance for farmers.
 - iii. Advocate for initiatives that encourage and support more sustainable farming techniques.
 - iv. Land Preservation - need land in order to have a profit farm.
- f. Increase Access and Availability to Healthy, Locally Grown Foods
 - i. Advocate for Farm to Institution Programs
 - ii. Increase Community Farmers Markets
 - iii. Increase Community and School Gardens
 - iv. Implement the Use of Vegetable Wagons or Mobile Markets
 - v. Increase the Use of Co-ops
 - vi. Increase Farming Opportunities & Incubator Farms -
 - vii. Increase Participation and Availability of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations
 - viii. Creation of Hybrid Markets
 - ix. Increase the selection of fresh, locally grown products in current retail outlets.
 - x. Advocate for the placement of supermarkets in underserved areas.
- g. Create and Sustain Environmentally Friendly Farming Operations
 - i. Advocate for Programs that would Develop and Recognize "Stewards of the Land"
 - ii. Advocate for Farm Incubator Programs.
 - iii. Educate Farmers about Environmentally Friendly Practices
 - iv. Advocate for South Carolina Natural Resource Conservation
- h. Ensure Food Safety of South Carolina Products from Farm to Consumer -
 - i. Establish a central clearinghouse for farmers, food service and consumers related to food safety regulation and compliance.
 - ii. Increase Consumer Education Efforts Related to Food Safety & Safe Food Handling Practices.
 - iii. Advocate for Subsidies that Encourage and Support Safe Food Practices on Farms and in Processing Facilities.
 - iv. Increase the number of GAP certified farms.

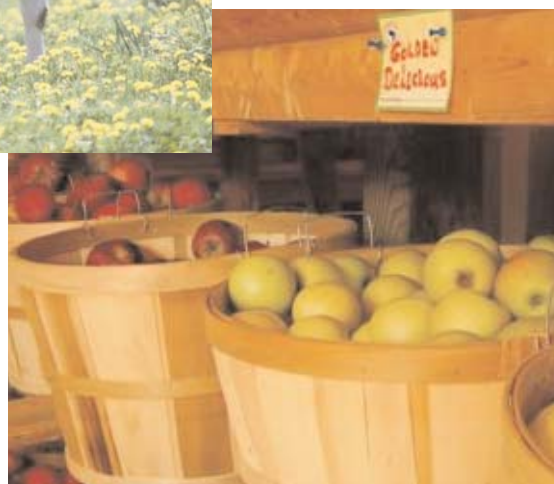
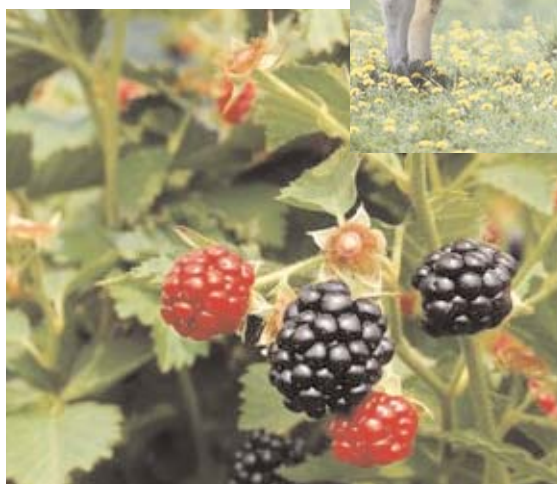
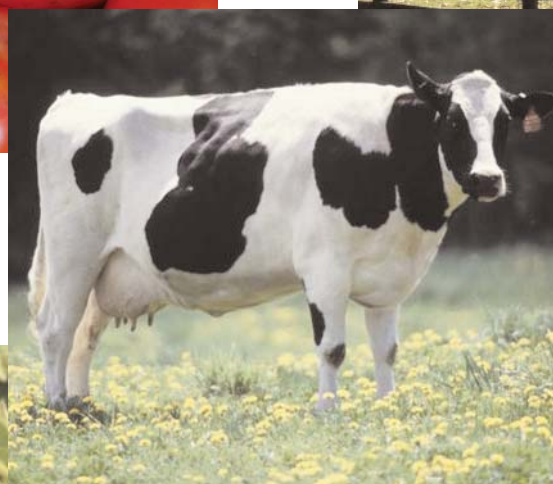
Next Steps

In an effort for SC to achieve sustainable local food systems, we recognize the inextricable link between agriculture, economics, the environment, food safety and health. This workshop was the first time for stakeholders from these various perspectives to come together to discuss challenges and solutions to support sustainable local food systems in South Carolina.

This report has been focused on identifying issues, concerns, policy needs and solutions to pave the way to ensure sustainable local food systems in the State. The resulting recommendations create a framework for the State of South Carolina and the SC Food Policy Council partners regarding sustainable local food systems. The SC Food Policy Council will engage partners to move forward on working towards achieving these recommendations and will report back annually on the progress.

Based upon the participation and commitment of partners involved with the S.C. Food Policy Council, South Carolina will move towards successfully implementing these recommendations to create sustainable local food systems.

For more information about this workshop and the SC Food Policy Council, please visit: www.agriculture.sc.gov.



Agenda
Friday, January 29, 2010
Hilton, Downtown Columbia, SC

8:00 am Breakfast & Workshop Registration/ Networking

9:00 am Welcome

Commissioner Hugh Weathers, South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Commissioner Earl Hunter, South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control

9:15 am "Why is a Sustainable Local Food System advantageous for South Carolina?"

Moderator Beth Crocker, South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Speaker on Economic Benefits - Hugh Weathers, Commissioner
Speaker on Environmental Benefits - Walter Douglas, NRCS-USDA
Speaker on Health (Nutritional) Benefits - Erika Kirby, SC DHEC
Speaker on Food Safety - Susan Barefoot, Clemson University
Speaker on Food Equality/Access Issues - Darcy Freedman, Univ. of SC

10:15 am Break

10:30 am Panel Discussion - Examples of Sustainable Local Food Systems in SC

Farm to School in Anderson County - Allison Schaum, Palmetto Ag Consultants
Institutional Dining Services- Michelle Burcin, Healthy Carolina at USC & Cynthia Steele, Sodexo
Local Foods in School Food Service - SC Department of Education - Todd Bedenbaugh. S.C.
Department of Education
Sustainability Practices on the Farm & in Food Processing - Charles Wingard, W.P. Rawl & Sons
Plant a Row Project - Kevin Elliott, University of South Carolina
Hub City Farmers Market -Ana Parra, Spartanburg, SC

12:00 pm Buffet Lunch, featuring menu items with Certified SC Grown Products. Prepared by Chef Paul Cernansky with Ruth's Chris Steak House.

1:15 pm Concurrent Focus Groups

"How can we make South Carolina's Food System sustainable?"
*Health/Food Accessibility & Equality - Susan Frost
*Economic & Farm Sustainability - Ansley Rast
*Food Safety/Food Processing Challenges - Emily Jackson & Amy London
*Environment - Meagan Derrick & Brooklynn Wynveen

3:15 pm Break

3:30 pm Focus Groups Report and Discussion

"What guiding principles and goals have we articulated for South Carolina's Sustainable Food Systems?"

5:00 - 6:30 pm Reception with Certified SC Grown appetizers - Blue Marlin (Old Train Depot downtown - 2 blocks from conference hotel). Doorprize Drawing!!!

List of Workshop Registrants

Cedric	Baele	Lowcountry Community Gardens	PO Box 21102	Charleston, SC 29413
Vonne	Baker	SC Farm Bureau Federation	PO Box 754	Columbia, SC 29202
Susan	Barefoot	Clemson University	104 Barre Hall-Experiment Station	Clemson, SC 29634
Elizabeth	Beak	Lowcountry Local First	1345 Avenue G #AA	North Charleston, SC 29405
Todd	Bedenbaugh	Office of SC Food Services & Nutrition	3710 Landmark Drive, Suite 300	Columbia, SC 29204
Violet	Beets	Healthy Carolina	1309 Blossom Street McBryde F	Columbia, SC 29208
Susan	Benson	CAFLS, Clemson University	101 Barre Hall	Clemson, SC 29634
Joseph	Berger	Butcher/Chef	12 Bosquet Marais	Seabrook, SC 29940
Bob	Bett	Marion County Extension		
Becky	Billingsley		20 Apache Trail	Myrtle Beach, SC 29588
Larry	Boyleston	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Jeanne	Brooks	The Greenville News	305 South Main Street	Greenville, SC 29601
Fred	Broughton	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Mike	Buck	Butter Patch Jerseys	175 Dairy Lane	Saluda, SC 29138
Patrice	Buck	Butter Patch Jerseys	175 Dairy Lane	Saluda, SC 29138
Michelle	Burcin	Healthy Carolina	1215 Blossom Street	Columbia, SC 29208
Rebecca	Burke	The Noisette Foundation	1895 Avenue F	North Charleston, SC 29408
Kevin	Campbell	Clemson University Area Livestock Agent		
Katherine	Cason	Clemson University	207 Poole Agriculture Center	Clemson, SC 29634
Cerelle	Centeno	Slow Food Columbia	2404 Park Street	Columbia, SC 29201
John	Champy	Persimmon Hill Farm		Beech Island, SC
Susan	Collier	SC DHEC	1070 Heckle Boulevard	Rock Hill, SC 29732
Kregg	Corley		415 Hope Ferry Road	Lexington, SC 29072
Beth	Crocker	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Sydney	Daigle	University of South Carolina Student	500 Alexander Road, Apartment 221	West Columbia, SC 29169
Chris	Daly	Harvest Hope Food Bank	PO Box 451	Columbia, SC 29202
Jay	Daniels	SC DHEC 1	800 Saint Julian Place	Columbia, SC 29201
Frances	Davis	Windmill Hill Farm	181 Littlefield Drive	Inman, SC 29349
Carol	Deacon	Three Dog Farm	2704 Bridgewater Road	Rock Hill, SC 29730
Megan	Derrick	USC Chemical Engineering Student	University of South Carolina	Columbia, SC
Bub	Dillion	Longbranch Farm	PO Box 397	Fair Play, SC 29643
Kim	Douglas			
Walter	Douglas	NRCS-USDA	1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6233	Washington, DC 20250
Pascal	Duke		329 Firefly Lane	Newberry, SC 29108
Kevin	Elliot	Department of Philosophy, University of South Carolina	423 Byrnes Building	Columbia, SC 29208
Martin	Eubanks	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Cathy	Forrester	Coastal Conservation League	PO Box 1765	Charleston, SC 29402
Cassandra	Fralix		1038 Corey Mill	Lexington, SC 29072
Darcy	Freedman	College of Social Work, University of South Carolina	1731 College Street, Room 202	Columbia, SC 29208
Susan	Frost	SC DHEC	1800 Saint Julian Place, Suite 406	Columbia, SC 29204
Kelly	Gilkerson	Clemson University Sustainable Ag Program	114 Long Hall	Clemson, SC 29634
York	Glover	Clemson Extension Service	PO Box 189	Beaufort, SC 29901
Kristian	Gordon	SC DHEC	1800 Saint Julian Place	Columbia, SC 29204
Brandon	Grace	Friends Food with a Flair	1500 Providence Church	Anderson, SC 29629
Holly	Harring	USC Coordinator of Healthy Carolina	1309 Blossom Street McBryde F	Columbia, SC 29201
Sarah	Heffron	Shadow Lane Farm	1077 Shadow Lane Road	Wagner, SC 29164
Rachel	Herold	Lowcountry Local First	22 Bee Street, Apt. C	Charleston, SC 29403
Naomi	Frost-Hewitt	Aiken Naturals	930 Springfield Church Road	Trenton, SC 29847
Teresa	Hill	SC DHEC	1777 Saint Julian Place	Columbia, SC 29204
Lan	Hoang	University of South Carolina PhD Student	101 Pickens Street, Apt. L3	Columbia, SC 29205
Ali	Hoffman	Healthy Carolina	1722 Enoree Ave., Apt. 3	Columbia, SC 29205
Jason	Houser		1332 Hampshire Road	Charleston, SC 29412
Earl	Hunter	Commissioner SC DHEC	2600 Bull Street	Columbia, SC 29201
Emily	Jackson	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project	729 Haywood Road #3	Asheville, NC 28806
Amanda	Jackson	The Corporation For Economic Opportunity	116 Wildewood Club Court	Columbia, SC 29229
Joe	James	Agri-tech Producers		
Jay	Janssen		500 Chesnut Street	Camden, SC 29020
Jennifer	Johnson	Clemson University	213 Old Six Mile Road	Central, SC 29630

Erin	Kee	University of South Carolina School of Law Student	329 Harden Street	Columbia, SC 29205
Wendy	King	Veterinary Consultant	804 Hermitage Pond Road	Camden, SC 29020
Erika	Kirby	DHEC	1800 Saint Julian Place	Columbia, SC 29204
Cal	Kohn	The Corporation For Economic Opportunity	116 Wildewood Club Court	Columbia, SC 29229
David	Lamie	Clemson Institute for Economic & Community Development	900 Clemson Road	Columbia, SC 29229
Amy	London	SC Peach Council	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Heidi	Lux			
Marie	Lybrand	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Eric	McClam	City Roots	1005 Airport Boulevard	Columbia, SC 29205
Jodie	McCord		PO Box 121	Ballentine, SC 29002
Joseph	McDomick, Jr.	Clemson Extension Service	PO Box 189	Beaufort, SC 29901
Larry	McKenzie	South Carolina Farm Bureau	PO Box 754	Columbia, SC 29202
Nelson	Mensch	Eco Sustainable Systems, LLC		
Tee	Miller	Black Mingo LLC	409 Meeting Street	Georgetown, SC 29440
Jennifer	Moore	United Way of the Midlands	1800 Main Street	Columbia, SC 29201
John	Newman	Kershaw County Planning and Zoning	515 Walnut Street, Room 160	Camden, SC 29020
Amy	Nichols	Clemson University	1116 Southern Acres	Anderson, SC 29625
Ana	Parra	Hub City Farmer's Market	298 Magnolia Street	Spartanburg, SC 29306
Julia	Petty	Healthy Carolina	1309 Blossom Street McBryde F	Columbia, SC 29208
Lori	Phillips	SC DHEC 1705 W. Evans Street Florence, SC 29501		
Ralph	Pitt	The Corporation For Economic Opportunity	116 Wildewood Club Court	Columbia, SC 29229
Kay	Pittman	Persimmon Hill Farm	396 Sprouse Road	Clarks Hill, SC 29821
Dan	Powell	Greenville County Planning Department		
Elizabeth	Pullan	Hub City Farmers' Market	298 Magnolia Street	Spartanburg, SC 29306
Donna	Putney	Upstate Locally Grown	PO Box 8	Honea Path, SC 29645
Ansley	Rast	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Michael	Robertson	Town of Mount Pleasant	PO Box 745	Mount Pleasant, SC 29465
Allison	Schaum		230 Sam Davis Road	Woodruff, SC 29388
Brian	Sheehan	City of Charleston	75 Calhoun Street	Charleston, SC 29401
Gary	Spire	SC Farm Bureau Federation	PO Box 754	Columbia, SC 29202
Pam	Spivey	United Way of Kershaw County	PO Box 737	Camden, SC 29021
Amy	Spittgerber	Eat Smart, Move More SC	PO Box 3007	Irmo, SC 29063
Laura	Stille		1310 Pinecrest Road	Spartanburg, SC 29302
Sheryl	Sturkie		575 Ramblin Road	West Columbia, SC 29170
Derrell	Sweatman	Windmill Hill Produce	4450 Hawkins Road	Greer, SC 29651
Craig	Thompson	Shadow Lane Farm	1077 Shadow Lane Road	Wagner, SC 29164
Senator Danny	Verdin	Chairman Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee	404 Gressette Building	Columbia, SC 29201
Diana	Vossbrink	Carolina Farm Stewardship Association	251 Shadow Creek Lane	Anderson, SC 29621
Alice	Wald	Carolina Farm Stewardship Association	98 Mountain View Drive	Walhalla, SC 29691
Becky	Walton	SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Hugh	Weathers	Commissioner, SC Department of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211
Bill	Welch	Welch and Son Farm		
Erica	Westbrook	NRCS-USDA	1835 Assembly Street	Columbia, SC 29229
Lucy	Williams	Carolina Farm Stewardship Association	701A North Greensboro Street	Carrboro, NC 27510
Rochelle	Williams	Healthy Kids Healthy Communities	PO Box 6728	Spartanburg, SC 29304
Keith	Willoughby	Wil-Moore Farms	2173 Ridgeway Road	Lugoff, SC 29078
Charles	Wingard	Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc.	824 Fairview Road	Pelion, SC 29123
Susan	Witkowski	Community Medical Clinic of KC	110 C. East DeKalb Street	Camden, SC 29020
Brooklyn	Wynveen	Clemson Farm-Fresh Farmers Market	403 Lindsay Road #1	Clemson, SC 29631
Bill	Yandle	Yandle's Produce	1001 Bluff Road	Columbia, SC 29201
Geoff	Zehnder	Clemson University	1116 Southern Acres	Anderson, SC 29625

2010 Legislative Summary of Bills Related to Subjects Discussed

During the 2010 Legislative Session of the SC General Assembly, there were a few pieces of legislation that pertained to some of the specific items mentioned in the focus groups. Summaries of these pieces of legislation are provided below:

H. 3179: Farm to School Program Act

The purpose of this bill is to foster a direct relationship between South Carolina farms and schools to provide schools with fresh and minimally processed foods for student consumption. This bill would encourage school districts to purchase locally and regionally in order to improve child nutrition and strengthen local and regional farm economies. By purchasing from the local and regional farms, the students would be provided with hands-on learning opportunities, such as farm visits, cooking demonstrations, and school gardening that could be incorporated in the curricula. The bill made it through the House but stalled in the Senate. Because the bill did not pass both bodies of the General Assembly it did not become law this year.

S.104: Agritourism Liability Bill

This bill is now law and protects an agritourism professional against liability resulting from inherent risks in an agritourism activity. This new law also mandates that each professional must display the appropriate warning signs related to the activity. This bill will only encourage and increase the agritourism industry in South Carolina. This bill passed the General Assembly and became effective September 1, 2010.

H.3297: Snacks Sold in Schools

The bill would provide fat, calorie and sugar content standards for snack foods and beverages sold in schools. This bill complements the SC Farm to School Program well and in conjunction, they would make healthy and locally grown snacks more readily accessible to students. This bill successfully passed the House, but did not make it out of committee while in the Senate. Because the bill did not pass both bodies of the General Assembly, it did not become law this year.

H.4793: Agribusiness Economic Authority.

This bill was introduced on March 25, 2010 to create an Authority within the department of agriculture to help alleviate the shortage of capital and credit available for investment in agribusiness; to provide for the Authority's members, officers, and employees; to provide for the Authority's powers including, among other things, the authority to make agribusiness loans, to issue bonds in order to make and purchase agribusiness loans, and to insure and reinsure agribusiness loans; to provide that the Authority is exempt from property tax; and to further provide the duties and obligations of the Authority and procedures under which the Authority shall carry out its powers, duties, and obligations. The bill was sponsored by Representative Loftis late in the 2010 session and did not become law this year.

TRAC Commission

On June 24, 2009, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor subsequently signed, Senate Bill 12 (Act 81 of 2009), creating the "South Carolina Tax Realignment Commission", also known as "TRAC".

The TRAC is a temporary and independent commission comprised entirely of non-legislators, was created to assess the effectiveness of the state's current tax structure and, in doing so, make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding necessary changes, if any, to that structure. TRAC Commissioners must have substantial academic and professional experience in related fields. Such changes must be designed to ensure that the state's tax structure is "balanced" so that the system is "adequate, equitable, and efficient."

The goal of TRAC, and ultimately of the state's tax structure, is the creation of a system that enhances the state's reputation as an "...optimum competitor in efforts to attract business and individuals to locate, live, work and invest..." in South Carolina. An example of what TRAC considers and discusses is the tax exemptions for farmers when they buy their supplies. The TRAC is also studying a possible soda tax, as a source of extra income for the state and as a way to influence people's health.

S 0452 - Surface Water Withdrawal Permitting

This bill was introduced in the Senate on February 19, 2009 by Senator Campbell to provide future water availability for farming, business and economic development, while also providing protection for the ecology of water bodies. The subcommittee adopted an amendment to the legislation that clarifies that withdrawals made from farm ponds for agricultural purposes would be exempt from all regulation. This bill passed in 2010 and takes effect, January 1, 2011.

